

COOKING WITH WILD GAME - Adapted from "Safe Handling of Wild Game" by Susan Brewer, Ph.D. and Charles Stites, M.S., The University of Illinois, 1995

Game animals lead active lives. As a result, their muscles are relatively lean. This makes game meat drier than domestic meat. For this reason, it is important to use cooking methods that add juiciness and flavor to the drier cuts of game meat. Game meat is generally cooked the same way as a similar cut of lean beef or poultry.

Cooking Tips

1. Thaw frozen game meat completely in the refrigerator at or below 40°F. Game meat is often high in bacterial content and its shelf-life is short. Use thawed game meat within 24 hours.
2. Trim away fat before cooking if this was not done when the game carcass was cut. Wild game fat tends to become rancid quickly contributing to "gamey" flavor. In addition, game fat tends to be very solid giving a "greasy" feeling in the mouth (especially if it cools off after cooking).
3. Add other fats to keep game meat from becoming too dry.
 - Rub a roast with salt pork, butter, margarine, beef suet, bacon fat, vegetable fat, sweet or sour cream to add moisture, richness, and flavor.
 - Baste very lean cuts with additional fat to improve flavor.
 - "Lard" your lean game meat by inserting slivers of uncooked salt pork or bacon into roasts with a skewer or ice pick. Allow about 3 ounces of fat per pound of meat. If you make your own rolled roasts add beef or pork fat to the inside and outside of the roast before it is tied (this is called "larding").
4. Use a meat thermometer when cooking wild game to be sure meat is done.
5. Roast or braise in an oven preheated to 325-350°F for about 25 min/pound of boneless meat. Roasting at oven temperatures exceeding 375°F will result in toughening of wild game.
6. Serve game meat very hot or very cold. Lukewarm game fat tastes greasy.

MARINADES

Marinades can tenderize, enhance or disguise game flavors to suite your taste. Cover meat with one of the following marinades and allow to stand in the refrigerator (34° - 40°F) at least 24 hours. Broil, roast, or braise.

A variety of "off the shelf" products are available for marinating meats; these include ready-made marinade mixes, French dressing, tomato sauce or undiluted tomato soup, tomato juice and fruit juice (such as lemon, pineapple, or a mixture of many juices).

Note: Marinades should not be used on the cooked meat unless they are brought to a rolling boil for 3 minutes to kill any bacteria which may be in them.

Marinade #1

2 cups vinegar
2 cups water
1/2 cup sugar

Marinade #2

1/4 cup vinegar
1/2 cup cooking oil
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 tsp. garlic salt

Marinade #3

2 cups water
 2 cups vinegar
 1-2 Tbsp. sugar
 4 bay leaves
 1 tsp. salt
 12 whole cloves
 1 tsp. allspice
 3 medium sized onions, sliced

Marinade #4

2 Tbsp. vinegar
 1 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
 1 clove garlic, minced
 2 Tbsp. brown sugar
 1/2 cup soy sauce
 3/4 cup vegetable oil

Marinade #5

Garlic salt, salt, and pepper to taste and equal parts of Worcestershire sauce and two of your favorite steak sauces.

SMALL GAME RECIPES**Quick Chili**

1 pound rabbit (or venison), ground
 1 Tbsp. butter, margarine, or
 chopped beef suet
 1 can (10 oz.) of condensed cream
 of tomato soup
 2 Tbsp. instant minced onions

2 tsp. salt
 2 to 4 tsp. chili powder (to taste)
 1/2 tsp. tarragon leaves (optional)
 1/8 tsp. ground black pepper
 2 cups red kidney beans
 1/4 to 1/2 tsp. red pepper (to taste)

Brown the meat in the fat. Stir in the soup, onions, salt, chili powder, tarragon leaves, pepper, kidney beans, and red pepper. Simmer 20 minutes. Serve hot over rice. Serves 6.
Note: Be sure that the meat is used immediately after thawing. Ground game meat, because of its high bacterial content, often spoils faster than other ground meat. Cook meat thoroughly!

Rabbit or Venison Stroganoff

2 pounds cubed rabbit (or venison)
 2 cups mushrooms, chopped (canned
 or chopped fresh)
 1 cup finely chopped onion
 1/4 cup butter or shortening
 3 beef bouillon cubes
 4 cups cooked rice

1 cup boiling water
 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
 1 tsp. dry mustard
 1/2 tsp. salt
 2 Tbsp. flour
 1 cup dairy sour cream
 1/2 cup cold water

In a large skillet, sauté fresh mushrooms and onion in 3 tablespoons butter until golden brown. Remove and set aside. Brown meat on all sides (15 minutes). Dissolve bouillon cubes in boiling water; pour over meat. Add tomato paste, mustard, and salt. Simmer 45 minutes or until meat is tender. Combine flour and water. Slowly stir into meat mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat. Add mushrooms, onions, and sour cream. Heat but do not boil. Serve over hot rice or noodles.
 Serves 4 to 6.

Chili Bean Sloppy Joes

1 pound rabbit or venison, ground	1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 Tbsp. shortening	1 1/3 cups canned tomatoes
3 Tbsp. sweet pepper flakes	1 cup of kidney beans drained
1/4 cup instant minced onion or	1/8 tsp. ground pepper
1 medium-sized onion diced	2 tsp. chili powder

Brown the meat in a heavy skillet with the shortening, stirring constantly. Add the sweet pepper flakes, onion, salt, and tomatoes. Stir and cook 10 minutes or until the mixture has thickened. Add drained kidney beans, pepper, and chili powder. Cook 5 minutes or until hot. Serve on hamburger buns.

Serves 6-8.

WILD GAME ROASTS

Tenderness will be the guide for choosing either moist or dry heat cookery to cook game roasts. Less tender roasts (shoulder, leg) can be oven roasted with dry heat at low temperatures for long periods of time or cooked with moist heat for shorter times.

Use a meat thermometer to judge the doneness of game roast. **Roast game to a minimum internal temperature of 160°F for safety.**

Timetable for Cooking Wild Game and Roasts

Oven Temperature: 325°F

Roast Weight	Time min. per pound	Internal Meat Temperature	
3 to 5 pounds	25 to 30	medium	160°F
		well done	170°F
4 to 6 pounds	30 to 35	medium	160°F
		well done	170°F

WILD GAME STEAKS & RIBS

Steaks and ribs retain more juice if the cuts are thick (1 to 1 1/4"). Tenderness will be the guide for choosing dry or moist heat cookery.

Use moist heat for less tender cuts or tenderize in one of these ways:

1. Cut the long muscle fibers by pounding or scoring.
 2. Soften the tissue by using acids (lemon juice, pineapple juice, tomato juice, vinegar, wine).
 3. Use commercially prepared marinades or tenderizers.
- Use dry heat cookery for tenderized or already tender cuts. Cook quickly over high heat.

Broiling Steak

Time allowed for each side when placed 1 inch from broiler:

medium	7 to 8 minutes
well done	10 to 11 minutes

Wild Game Pot Roast

3-4 lb. <i>roast</i> (shoulder or leg)	1/2 tsp. salt
2 cup water	4 slices bacon
1 bay leaf	4 carrots, quartered
1/8 tsp. thyme	6 small potatoes, quartered
1/8 tsp. basil	1 small onion, sliced
1/4 tsp. pepper	(Use other vegetables, if desired)
1/4 tsp. celery salt	1/2 cup sour cream

Place roast, water, and seasonings in a heavy pan. Lay bacon strips on roast. Cover pan tightly. Simmer until nearly tender. Add vegetables and cook with the roast until all vegetables are tender (and meat thermometer should read at least 160°F). Add sour cream. Heat but do not boil. Serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

Venison Steak in Mirepoix*

1 Tbsp. butter or margarine	2 lb. leg <i>steak</i> , 1/2 inch thick
1/2 cup carrots, diced 1/4 inch thick	salt and pepper
1/2 cup celery, diced 1/4 inch thick	garlic powder
1/2 cup onion, diced 1/4 inch thick	1/4 cup flour
1/4 bay leaf	2 Tbsp. butter or margarine
2 cups beef broth	

To make mirepoix, melt 1 Tbsp. butter or margarine in a sauce pan and sauté vegetables slowly until limp. Add bay leaf and beef broth. Simmer gently for 5 minutes. Trim excess fat from sides of meat. Slash sides to prevent curling. Sprinkle steak with salt, pepper and garlic powder, then dredge in flour. Melt 2 Tbsp. butter or margarine in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Brown steak on both sides. Add mirepoix. Cover skillet tightly and simmer over low heat until tender (about 1 1/2 hours). Serve venison in large pieces with some sauce spooned over each piece. Serves 4 to 6.

*Mirepoix is a classic mixture of vegetables and liquid used in French cooking as a flavor enhancer.

Venison Roast

4-5 lb. <i>roast</i>	2 Tbsp. instant minced onion
1 tsp. salt	2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/2 tsp. pepper	4 slices bacon
2 lemons, sliced	

Remove all fat from venison roast. Place in a roasting pan and rub with salt and pepper. Sprinkle onion and Worcestershire sauce over roast. Cover roast with bacon and lemon. Roast covered, at 325°F for about 4 hours until tender (meat thermometer should read at least 160°F). Add a small amount of hot water, if needed. Serves 8 to 10.

GROUND GAME RECIPES

Meat from any part of the carcass can be ground. Be sure that the meat is used immediately after thawing. Ground game meat, because of its high bacterial content, often spoils faster than other ground meat. Cook meat thoroughly!

Gameburgers

2 lb. <i>ground game meat</i>	1 small onion, chopped
1/4 lb. suet or other meat fat, cut into small pieces*	garlic salt
	pepper
1 cup bread crumbs	1/3 cup milk

Mix ingredients and fry like hamburgers to at least 160°F (check temperature with meat thermometer). Serve with tomato, onion, or pickle slices on toasted buns. Serves 6.

*Variation: Use 1 lb. ground beef (70% lean) and 1 lb. ground game meat. Omit added fat.

Venison Meat Balls

3 slices soft bread	1 small onion, finely chopped
1 1/2 lb. <i>ground venison</i>	1/4 c butter or margarine
2 tsp. salt	1 Tbsp. flour
1/8 tsp. oregano	salt and pepper (for gravy)
1/8 tsp. basil	1 cup milk
1/4 tsp. pepper	

Break bread into small pieces and combine with ground venison, salt, oregano, basil, pepper and onion. Mix thoroughly. Shape into small balls about 1 inch in diameter. Chill for 15 to 20 minutes. Brown in butter or margarine, turning frequently. Cover pan. Turn heat to low and cook for 15 minutes. Remove meat balls. Add flour, salt and pepper to pan drippings. Mix well. Add milk, stirring constantly and simmer 3 to 4 minutes. Return meat balls to pan with gravy and simmer another 5 minutes. Serves 4.



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